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PRESS ADVISORY

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Secretary of Defense William Perry will travel to Whiteman AFB, Mo. on Monday, December 5, 1994 as part of his on-going military base visitation program. He will return to Washington later that evening.

The point of contact is Capt. Bill Harrison, Whiteman AFB public affairs officer, at (816) 687-6123.

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SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY
 COMMENTS AFTER FLYING B-2, AS QUOTED IN THE PRESS
 WHITEMAN AIR FORCE BASE, MO
 DECEMBER 5, 1994

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PERRY GETS HANDS-ON B-2 EXPERIENCE

JOHN D. MORROCCO/WASHINGTON

Some 15 years after presiding over the genesis of the stealth bomber program, U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry was given a close-up look at the fruits of his labor last week when he flew in a B-2 at Whiteman AFB, Mo.

After touring the base facilities, Perry underwent some 2 hr. of briefings and training, including a flight simulator, before climbing into the cockpit of the "Spirit of California," the most recent B-2 to be delivered from Northrop Grumman to the 509th Bomb Wing. Perry flew a 2-hr. mission with Lt. Col. Tony Imondi, deputy commander of the 509th operations group and a B-2 instructor pilot.

"This is an airplane with which I was deeply involved in the concept and design, and it was a special thrill to see that vision realized," Perry said after the flight. "When this wing is fully operational, it will have a fearsome capability."

The wing currently operates four B-2s,

and the Air Force hopes to receive a fifth before the end of the year. Northrop is scheduled to deliver three more in 1995.

The program has been affected by problems discovered with the General Electric F118 engine, a derivative of the F110. "We have had to do some shell games with the engines, moving things around. But by and large it has not dramatically affected the pulse of the program," an Air Force official said.

The problems were mainly with early delivery engines, which affected the developmental rather than production aircraft. Replacement spares have been made available, but "it is not a perfect picture," the official said. "It's a difficult balancing act" allocating the spares to keep on schedule as the rigor of the program increases in terms of testing, flight operations at Whiteman AFB and production acceptance.

The standdown caused some near-term setbacks in the already aggressive B-2 test

program. A few events were deferred as a result of the engine problems. Whether that can be overcome by stepping up the pace remains to be seen.

THE AIR FORCE IS studying pricing data on an additional 20 B-2s from Northrop Grumman (AW&ST Dec. 5, p. 62). The service is looking in "detail at some of the ground rules and assumptions used by Northrop Grumman to come up with their cost positions," an Air Force official said.

The company's price quotes are only one piece of the effort, however. Service officials are also considering infrastructure costs, as well as associated operations, support and personnel ramifications. For example, the Air Force is looking at whether to base an additional 20 B-2s at Whiteman or a second base.

Congress has provided \$125 million to keep the B-2 line open for another year and pay for the studies, estimated to cost around \$4.5 million. The service official said \$25 million of that is on "hold" pending the further outcome of the studies. This pool of money is being reserved in the event that the studies indicate a requirement for a new bomber.

"One of the key questions is whether [bomber] industrial base preservation means B-2 preservation," he said. "The jury is still out on that." ■